

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The view of Badacsony hill across foggy Lake Balaton

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases Sept demographic, industry output figures

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

PM: EUROPE SHOULD DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLY

The long-term solution to the ongoing energy crisis is for Europe to procure as much energy from as many directions as possible, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after talks with Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili.

Orbán signed a strategic partnership agreement with Georgian Garibashvili in Budapest. In their joint statement to the press, Orbán said energy prices would go down from increased supply, which was in Hungary's fundamental interest, as the country "is fighting inflation, which in large part is caused by high energy prices". Plans are to set up a new large electricity line system that would deliver energy from Azerbaijan to Hungary via Georgia and Romania, he said.

This could be used to replace a large amount of natural gas that Hungary currently uses to generate electricity, Orbán said. Instead, Hungary would now receive electricity directly, he added.

Meanwhile, Orbán criticised the "discriminatory" decision by Brussels to grant EU candidate status to Moldova and Ukraine but not Georgia. Georgia's efforts over the past years make it deserving of candidate status, the prime minister said, adding that the decision taken in Brussels was "disrespectful" to the Georgian people and nation. Hungary continues to support granting Georgia candidate status as quickly as possible, Orbán said.

ORBÁN: JOINT HUNGARIAN-GEORGIAN GOVT SESSION IN PIPELINE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told a press conference after talks with his Georgian counterpart, Irakli Garibashvili, that their governments will hold a joint session in Georgia next year following a preparatory ministerial meeting. The joint government meeting is aimed at giving new momentum to bilateral economic cooperation. He said there was a "benevolent prejudice" towards Georgia in Hungary and though the two countries are geographically far apart, there were many similarities between them geopolitically. Also, both nations have major cultural traditions and a unique language which they have to preserve while being surrounded by larger peoples, he added.

Hungary and Georgia share very similar views when it comes to geopolitics, war and peace, Orbán said. "We Hungarians want an immediate ceasefire in the Ukraine-Russia war and peace talks to be held as soon as possible, which is very similar to the Georgian approach," he said. Garibashvili said Georgia's primary goal was to obtain EU candidate status and an eventual membership. He expressed his thanks for Hungary's support in this goal as well as its support of Georgia's territorial integrity. Georgia is currently implementing the European Council's recommendations, he said, adding that its economic growth was in the

double digits. He said Georgia also wanted to join NATO, noting the country's "huge sacrifices" in NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Garibashvili said the war in Ukraine was "completely unacceptable", adding that Georgia supported Ukraine in every way it could. He welcomed the strategic partnership signed with Hungary, vowing to support the joint energy project.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK: EU NEEDS OPEN INTERNAL, SECURE EXTERNAL BORDERS

Europe needs easily traversable, open internal and secure external borders, President Katalin Novák told a press conference in Vienna on Thursday, after meeting her Austrian counterpart, Alexander Van der Bellen. Novák told the joint press conference that they had touched on the war in Ukraine and the situation of Hungarians living there, energy independence, migration and the importance of the European Union's enlargement in the Western Balkans. At the talks, Novák and Van der Bellen agreed that the two countries should have stable relations and be strong allies. Regarding migration, Novák said Hungary was on the same page with Austria that accepting and helping refugees was a humanitarian task. At the same time, while regulating legal economic immigration could be a sovereign national decision, firm countermeasures are needed against illegal migration, she said.

Van der Bellen told the press conference that "we in Austria might not be aware of the special significance of this war for Hungary, because of the Hungarian minority living in Ukraine," which he said made the situation "especially worrisome" for Hungary.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'NAIVE' TO THINK RUSSIAN- UKRAINIAN TALKS CAN END WAR

The belief that talks between Russia and Ukraine can end the war between the two countries is a "naive illusion", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Thursday, adding that US-Russia talks were needed to end the conflict. In order for such talks to take place, however, it would be important for the leaders of the United States and Russia to meet at the upcoming G20 summit in Indonesia, the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying ahead of a meeting between the foreign ministers of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Buenos Aires.

"If they're already in the same place, I think it would be very hard to explain to anyone on Earth why they weren't meeting with each other," Szijjártó said. "We understand that protocol is important, we understand that it's important for everyone to make themselves seem strong, stronger than the other. But there are hundreds of thousands dying, millions fleeing, the whole world has been thrust into crisis and this regional war ... must

be prevented from escalating into a world war." Though the conflict in Ukraine is a regional one, it has serious negative effects for the whole world, the minister said.

"The world's energy supply is in crisis, as is the food supply of many areas," Szijjártó said. "Inflation is sky-high all over the world, economies are sliding into recession and millions of jobs are at risk." The entire world's interest lies in ending this war as soon as possible, Szijjártó said. "However, we are concerned to see that certain big and powerful countries, certain large and strong international organisations constantly engage in war rhetoric," he said. "And their remarks and decisions are pushing this war more towards escalation than towards peace."

"It's time for the major international players ... to make decisions that promote peace rather than escalation," Szijjártó said, urging international players to refrain from making decisions that would further aggravate the situation. Szijjártó is scheduled to hold talks with his Argentine, Costa Rican, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, Jamaican, Colombian, Nicaraguan and Panamanian counterparts on the sidelines of the EU-CELAC meeting.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: NO HOPE FOR PEACE WITHOUT EAST-WEST DIALOGUE

The world will give up even the hope for peace if communication between the west and Russia becomes impossible, Foreign Minister Péter

Szijjártó said at a roundtable organised by the Conservative Partnership Institute (CPI) in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. The foreign ministry quoted Szijjártó as saying that "when the Hungarian government argued for keeping channels for communication open, it was instantly labelled as pro-Russia or an ally for Russian President Vladimir Putin". The European Union has "totally mismanaged" the Ukraine crisis, he insisted, and said that while the EU's sanctions had been expected to help end the war quickly back in February "it is now November and the armed conflict is getting more brutal and the European economy is on its knees". Szijjártó said the US administration's moves could contribute to an escalation of the situation. The Hungarian government has an interest in keeping communications channels open, in the interest of peace. Its policies are "neither pro-Ukraine or pro-Russia", they are exclusively determined by Hungary's interests, Szijjártó said.

GULYÁS: AUTHOR OF SANCTIONS 'RUSSIA'S BEST FRIEND' - PAPER

"Whoever was behind the Brussels sanctions launched because of the war in Ukraine, the person is Russia's best friend as the European Union has not hurt Russia but itself by way of those measures," the prime minister's chief of staff told Swiss weekly *Weltwoche*. Concerning criticism by the European press and politicians in Brussels over the Hungarian government's attitude

towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Gergely Gulyás said "Hungary is not Russian President Vladimir Putin's Trojan horse" in an interview published on Thursday. "Such accusations are the worst propaganda," Gulyás said, and stressed Hungary condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine just as all other EU member states. Hungary has launched an aid programme to support 1.2 million Ukrainian refugees, it supports Ukraine financially and has also backed the EU's sanctions against Russia, he added. He also said, however, that "Russia has earned (on energy) this year twice as much as last year", adding that "through its sanctions, the West contributes to financing Russia's aggression". He called for a "European debate" to be held as soon as possible to determine the EU's policy concerning the war in Ukraine. "What the community needs is intelligent sanctions that would hurt Russia rather than Europe," Gulyás said.

KÖVÉR MEETS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS OF ALGERIA

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér on Thursday met Ibrahim Boughali, the president of the National People's Congress of Algeria, and they signed a letter of intent on cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries. Kövér told the press after the meeting that Hungary and Algeria had established diplomatic relations some sixty years ago and the two countries maintained friendly relations for a long time.

Hungary currently offers a hundred scholarships to Algerian students wishing to study in the country, Kövér said. Despite expanding economic and trade relations over the years, they are still behind the expected level, he said. A meeting of the Hungary-Algeria mixed economic committee in the first half of next year is hoped to identify the areas where links can be further developed, he added.

Algeria and Hungary should also coordinate their positions on the Russia-Ukraine war and on seeking opportunities for peaceful cooperation, Kövér said. Boughali noted the support that Hungary provided to Algeria when the country was fighting for independence, medical and humanitarian aid offered by Hungary and the important role of Hungarian professionals in rebuilding the country. He said the two countries had the same view of many international affairs and it would be useful to act together at international forums.

DEUTSCH: EP COMMITTEE MISSION TO BE 'ONE-SIDED'

The programme of an upcoming visit by the European Parliament's committee for culture and education (CULT) to Hungary has "turned out to be one-sided", Tamás Deutsch, MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz, said on Wednesday and suggested that the committee had dismissed his party's recommendations.

Fidesz MEP Andrea Bocskor and others had "recommended a

number of institutions and people" for the committee to contact while in Hungary but they "neglected the most fundamental expectations of impartiality and variety", Deutsch insisted in a letter to Sabine Verheyen, the head of the committee. Deutsch said the programme was imbalanced, giving a disproportionately large focus to "opposition, leftist or liberal politicians, activists, institutions, journalists and civil organisations critical of the government". While the programme includes meetings with "some two dozen militant anti-government" figures, the delegation will "meet only a few government players", he said. "The way the programme was made reinforces the suspicion that its one-sided character had not been caused by a lack of prudence but by a deliberate political intent," Deutsch said.

EDUCATION STATE SECY CALLS FOR TALKS WITH TEACHERS' UNIONS

Zoltán Maruzsa, the state secretary in charge of public education has invited representatives of the strike committee of teachers' unions for November 7, a senior official of the union PDSZ said on Thursday. Erzsébet Nagy spoke at a press conference held prior to a demonstration that began in Budapest, in which students, parents and teachers formed a live chain to support the unions' demands. She said that simultaneously with the Budapest event, "thousands

of teachers" rejected holding their classes across the country during the day and demonstrations were planned in front of 33 school district headquarters out of a total 60. PDSZ has called a general teachers' strike for November 18, Nagy said. The noÁr Movement has called for a general strike in solidarity with teachers. Áron Molnár, its founder, said education was "not an issue for just Left or Right, rural Hungary or the capital, liberals or conservatives, but a common, national cause". He said "the ever growing crowd is now standing up not only for education, but for health care, welfare, and for all groups in society that this government has left in shallow water".

EC LAUNCHES PROBE OF EUR 43.8 M STATE AID FOR CAR PARTS PLANT INVESTMENT IN N HUNGARY

The European Commission on Thursday announced the launch of an in-depth investigation to assess whether a 43.8 million euro government grant for a new automotive components plant in an underdeveloped region in northern Hungary complied with state aid rules. Rubin NewCo's new plant would take over the capacity of two other group production sites in Europe, creating around 1,500 jobs. The EC acknowledged that the scale of the support is under the 31.88% EU threshold for state

aid in disadvantaged regions. The probe aims to determine whether the grant is proportionate and has no undue negative effects on competition, the body said. The EC said it “has doubts” on whether the aid is in line with EU rules. It added that the launch of the probe “does not prejudge in any way” its outcome.

SURVEY: MOST HUNGARIANS FOR CEASEFIRE, PEACE TALKS - SZÁZADVÉG

Most Hungarians, 92%, want to see an immediate end to the Russia-Ukraine war and have the sides engage in peace talks, according to a survey conducted this month by the Századvég Foundation and released to MTI on Thursday.

Századvég gauged the opinion of Hungarians on a sample of 1,000 adults.

As the prospect of ending the war “has not drawn closer”, it is not surprising that the opinion of respondents has remained clearly negative about leading politicians involved directly or indirectly in the war, Századvég said.

This month, fully 67% of respondents expressed a negative opinion about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, compared with 68% in September while those seeing Russian President Vladimir Putin in a negative light increased to 72% from last month’s 68%.

HÖLVÉNYI: HIGH-LEVEL EDUCATION IN AFRICA KEY TO PREVENTING MASS MIGRATION

Africa needs to have high-quality education because it will “not only contribute to appropriate living standards but will help prevent mass migration, too”, György Hölvényi, MEP of Hungary’s co-ruling Christian Democrats, told MTI on Wednesday. Hölvényi spoke on the sidelines of a conference that he had initiated to discuss ways of providing education for youth in refugee camps, war zones or in other crisis situations. Noting the inadequacy of the education system in Africa, the MEP said the continent would need some two million new teachers by 2030 just to maintain the current level of education. Some 40% of schools in Africa are run by religious organisations, Hölvényi said, regretting that churches could not access community funding. “The European Union gladly lectures others and tells them what they should do, but it would not consider the actual opportunities,” he said, adding that the conference had provided an opportunity for the EU to learn about the actual needs from local, African experts. At least 10% of the EU’s funds given to developing countries is spent on education, Hölvényi said, adding that it was an “encouraging start” but he also called for closer cooperation with local organisations so that those moneys are made the best use of.

JOBLESS RATE REACHES 3.8 % IN SEPTEMBER

Hungary’s jobless rate reached 3.8% in September, edging up from 3.6% in the previous month but down from 4.0% twelve months earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Thursday. The rate covers unemployment among people between the ages of 15 and 74. In absolute terms, 184,900 unemployed were registered, 8,200 more than a month earlier but 9,800 fewer than in September 2021. The rolling three-month average jobless rate stood at 3.6% in September, up from 3.4% in August but down from 3.9% twelve months earlier.

The monthly jobless rate for the 15 to 64-year-old age group stood at 3.8%, up from 3.7% in the previous month but down from 4.1% a year earlier. KSH uses the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of jobless which includes people who are without work, people who carried out activities to seek employment in the previous past four weeks, and people who did not look for work but made arrangements for a future job start within two weeks.

OVER 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 5,419 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 4,917 crossed

from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 230 people, ORFK told MTI on Thursday. Holders of such permits must contact a local immigration office near their place of residence within thirty days to apply for permanent documents, it added. Budapest received 178 people, 69 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

AGRICULTURE MINISTER INAUGURATES HUF 10.5 BN IRRIGATION SCHEME IN SE HUNGARY

Agriculture Minister István Nagy on Thursday inaugurated "Hungary's largest irrigation project" at the National Stud and Teaching Farm of Mezőhegyes, in south-east Hungary. The new system, built at a cost of 10.5 billion forints (EUR 25.6m), has doubled the farm's irrigable land, the minister said in his address.

The minister pointed to irrigation systems as key to increase the competitiveness of the agriculture and "achieve food sovereignty", adding

that "we have reached that milestone". He said the unprecedented droughts seen across Europe had affected 46% of Hungary's arable land, and warned that water should be secured in the rainy season and reserved for dry periods. Regrettably, only about 50% of Hungary's 174,200 hectares of currently irrigable land was actually irrigated in 2021, Nagy said, adding that the government was aiming to increase the irrigated area to 200,000 hectares by 2024, and to 350,000 hectares by 2030. The project was co-financed by the government, which provided 8.5 billion forints in the form of a capital raise.

BUDAPEST FINE ARTS MUSEUM OPENS LARGE-SCALE EL GRECO EXHIBITION

A large-scale exhibition presenting some 50 autograph paintings of Cretan-Spanish master El Greco opened in Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts on Thursday. Featuring altogether 70 works, it is the first comprehensive exhibition on the oeuvre of El Greco (1541-1614) ever

organised in Budapest, László Baán, the director of the museum, said at the opening. "This show has been long overdue also because the Budapest Fine Arts Museum's collection preserves the largest number of El Greco paintings in Europe after Spain," he said. Baan noted that the newly acquired title, "Portrait of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga", one of the first pictures El Greco painted after arriving in Spain, is also on display. Purchased at a Christie's auction in June, the oil-on-canvas has been added to the five El Greco paintings preserved in the museum's exceptional Spanish collection. János Csák, the minister for culture and innovation, told MTI that more than 40 titles are on loan from public, private and church collections in Europe and overseas. Leticia Ruiz Gomez, curator of the exhibition, said the first painting visitors encounter is Saint Sebastian, which was "an excellent allegory of Greco's life and the exceptional journey that took him from Crete through Venice and Rome to Spain". The exhibition will run until February 19 next year.